

The Washington Post

Communing With Neighbors: Co-Housing Developments Bring Together Residents Seeking Community

By Author: Deborah K. Dietsch
Date: Jul 21, 2001 [FINAL Edition]
Start Page: H.01
Section: REAL ESTATE
Word Count: 2037

Abstract (Document Summary)

Other co-housing communities have taken even longer. Liberty Village Cohousing was conceived in 1989. After a six-year search, the group purchased 27 acres of farmland east of Frederick with a down payment of \$125,000 shared among five households. To help finance the development, the group sold off five acres, including an existing farmhouse. Members spent the next three years working to rezone the parcel for residential use. By the time construction of the first homes had begun in 1998, five of the 23 households had left the group.

Across the Potomac, EcoVillage is taking shape in Loudoun County after more than a decade of planning. Standing in one of six houses being constructed on the 180-acre property, developer Grady O'Rear explains the merits of the energy-saving, "green" architecture. Walls are framed in structural insulated panels; floors will be covered in bamboo; and rooms will be heated by a geothermal system similar to the one at Takoma Village. The average price of a four-bedroom house is \$360,000. So far, 19 of the 25 parcels in the first phase of EcoVillage have been sold; a second cluster of 25 lots will go on sale next year.

In contrast to the decade-long development of these rural enclaves, Takoma Village Cohousing was organized and occupied in just more than two years. Its success has led other co-housing groups to collaborate with [Don Tucker]. The architect-developer has been hired by a Baltimore group and by one in Annapolis called Chesapeake Cohousing, which is planning to build 20 to 25 houses. "We have nine households that meet about three times a month," member [Dave Johnson] said. He said the Annapolis group is still searching for a site.

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